

## Smooth-ology

It is just amazing and a little disgusting too, how when anything good comes along into public knowledge, how the processed food industry quickly jumps on it and you see the name all over the place on thousands of products—most of which do not provide the benefits that the good thing itself does. In fact most of them will be found to be downright harmful and not beneficial at all and those that may be a little beneficial are not near what the original good thing itself would be.



Take for instance Smoothies. Smoothies are something that a few years ago nobody had heard of, but are now main-stream all over the place. Are smoothies good or bad? It all depends. You are fairly safe to say that all commercially produced smoothies are pretty questionable to say the least; being too sweet and containing added chemicals. But let's look at what can be a beneficial nutritional staple for a healthy diet.

The secret is to make your own smoothies; don't make them too sweet; make them fresh and use them right away; keep them simple and make leafy greens a big part of the ingredients. For fruity things, smoothies are the better choice over juicing as the whole fruit is used and fiber is still present, this avoids insulin rebounds especially if you don't make them too sweet. A smoothie can be kept refrigerated for a day if needed, but fresh is always your aim.

The method for making smoothies will depend on how good your blender is; if you have a super blender like Vita Mix, Blend-Tech or Omni-Blend you have no worries. Even the lower priced Oster can turn out a pretty good smoothie! If you have a standard blender, you can still do it OK but may have to add a bit more liquid to get things smoothied out.

Always keep in mind that any recipe can go from dull to delicious by being aware of the Five basic flavor groups; Bland or Bitter; Sour or Tangy; Salt; Sweet; Spicy or aromatic.

### **Basic smoothie material:**

#### **The Fruit Base: Bland/ Creamy:**

The creamy base requires either nicely ripe bananas and/or mangoes as they blend up into a smooth texture. Use nicely ripe bananas, Mango can also be used or peaches. Ripe pears sometimes work also to give a creamy base for your smoothie. It is good to add apple because the pectin in apple is great to absorb and flush toxins from the body; but apple alone does not create a creamy texture.

#### **The Sweet:**

It is better not to add sweeteners, even dates or honey, as to make the smoothie too sweet is to invite an insulin spike followed by an energy crash a couple hours later. All around it is best to train oneself away from hyper-sweet in any food. Nicely ripened bananas with a sprinkling of little spots on them are sweet enough usually, unless you are blending raw cranberries or something sour like that, and if you are—use less cranberries and more banana. A few stevia leaves are OK if you wish.

#### **The Tangy Flavor:**

Banana, apple and pear, melons, as well as blueberries all are all wonderful in smoothies but have a rather bland taste; adding some tangy fruit boosts the 'Yum Factor' of your smoothie. Frozen or fresh raw Strawberries, raspberries, a few cranberries, juice of a small ripe lemon or lime is excellent to add

for health reasons and gives a fresh, tangy taste; fresh orange or tangerines; some soft fruits like peaches, apricots or mango, also seedless grapes can be used to tang up your flavor. All total the fruit base should constitute about 1/3 of your smoothie.

### **The Greens: (Bitter/Bland)**

The leafy greens should be the main ingredient making up about half of your smoothie; Pack them in. If you are using mild favoured greens you will hardly taste them through the flavor of the fruit. If your greens are the slightly bitter type, such as Arugula, Rapini, or Watercress, use more banana and tangy fruit to offset this. A stalk or 2 of celery and/or cucumber can also be added to green smoothies.

The greens can be a cup or two of raw baby leaf or even adult spinach, kale, collard greens, Swiss chard, beet greens, or other tender greens which make the smoothie into a celebration of nutrients! Unless you have chosen a very strong tasting leafy green, you can't really taste them in the smoothie and thus this is a great way to get children and seniors into using more raw leafy greens which are packed with vitamins, calcium and minerals. It is especially good if you can get organic greens.

### **The Liquid:**

For the liquid part, you can use fresh raw juice if you have it, or use pure water and add a few raw cashews or soaked almonds and let the machine make its own fresh milk in your smoothie. Although dairy or yogurt can be added, I do not recommend these on a whole food, plant based diet. Commercial non-dairy milks are really not fresh and raw and nearly always have chemicals, sweeteners or other undesirable additives; use them if you need to but this is not ideal.

I find watermelon juice good which I obtain by juicing the rinds of the melon, which I save in a bowl after cutting off the red part for eating. I juice these rinds after removing just the thin layer of hard green outer skin. The result is a mildly sweet juice resembling cucumber but it is a good source of pure live water. This is a way to utilize something that otherwise would be wasted. I always wash the melon thoroughly before it is cut, and if it is organic or very clean looking I sometimes juice the green part as well—but mostly find it better to cut that thin layer off. By the way, this is a great way to use up a melon you may have bought that the texture and/or sweetness is not what you enjoy eating—cut it up and juice it! It will provide a refreshing beverage and also can be good as liquid for smoothies!

### **The Extras: Salt/ Spicy or Aromatic:**

Other items that can be added for flavor and nutritive value are a teaspoon of dulse flakes; a few leaves of mint, parsley or other dried herbs. If you want added fiber, a teaspoon of phylum husk, Inulin, or slippery elm powder is good. I sometimes dump the contents of a tea-bag of herbal, non-caffeine tea in there as well.

### **Added Energy and staying power:**

Sometimes you want your smoothie as a light refreshing drink, and this is also good if you are using it for weight loss; but if you need to have a more hearty full-meal-smoothie that will take you from one meal to the next you can add a few energy rich items. Ideally these should be raw, plant-source, and whole.

Increase nutrition and energy by adding a few soaked nuts; walnuts; almond; cashew; these all tend to make a milk base to your smoothie. I soak a large amount of nuts or large seeds at a time, rinse them, and then freeze them in single-serving packs so I can throw them into a smoothie as needed.

A tablespoon of Flax or Chia seed is great to add to most smoothies for fiber and essential oils; a tablespoon of other whole raw seeds, such as Pumpkin, sunflower, if you have not used more than one type of nuts; one type of nut and one type of seed is alright, but to mix too many kinds of nuts with a lot of kinds of seeds can be too high in fat content. Sesame seed is a great source of calcium, as is soaked whole almonds. Half a small avocado can be used for a great creamy smoothie, but best not to use nuts and seeds with it. Remember these raw, high fat foods are great to have in your diet, but in modest amounts.

There really is no end to the combinations you can make and have it turn out delicious if you keep in mind the basics; the base; the greens; the tangy additions; a few extra things as needed and available to add to the flavor, nutrition and energy; some pure water or fresh juice.

### **Fruit or Green-Smoothie-Pud:**

Another quick-trick to use for a change is the Fruit-Smoothie-Pud or Green-Smoothie-Pud. This is a more hearty version of the Smoothie; made much the same as the Smoothie, making sure to add some raw nuts or seeds for protein and a little fat (not too much); and soaked rolled oats, cooked Quinoa, or cooked Buckwheat, is added which will create the pudding-like consistency. This can be poured into desert dishes and then placed in the refrigerator to set. It makes a tasty treat that can be eaten with a spoon rather than just drank. Children and older folk seem to enjoy this idea. Here is a guide to basic ingredients:

The 6 Basic Green Smoothie-Pud Ingredients:

**Liquid** (water, or fresh raw juice) 2 Cups

**Greens** (Spinach, Chard, Collard Greens, Lettuce, Kale or other mild greens) 2 Cups

**Fruit** (Add any fruit you like, you don't have to worry about adding creamy fruit as the oats make it creamy)

**Filler** (1 cup of soaked Oats, cooked Quinoa, cooked Buckwheat, cooked sweet potato; Sweet Corn)

**Seeds or nuts** (Any raw seeds or nuts can be added)

**Sweetener** (If it needs it, add a couple dates, more ripe banana, or some stevia leaves.)

For more ideas and great recipes visit: <http://www.greenthickies.com>

### **Ice Cream:**

Make your smoothie in Super-Blender or Food Processor using frozen bananas and other frozen fruits and serve while still frozen. More delicious and healthier than the chemical soup that sells as ice-cream! Be sure to add some mild greens like baby spinach for extra nutrition in a form that children love! (Tell them this is 'alligator Ice-cream' or something imaginative like that)

### **Tips and Tricks:**

For most of us that want to have top quality mostly raw nutrition on a budget, it helps to be aware of bargains and how to take advantage of them.

Bananas: when you see a sale on good quality Bananas buy a lot of them; then watch them carefully until they have just that nice degree of ripeness with small sugar spots but not gone to the mushy stage. Then peel your bananas and freeze them in bags or containers where you will be able to remove the frozen bananas one by one. These are then great for all the above recipes.

Organic Greens; if you buy these in pre-washed bags or containers, when a bargain is seen then buy lots and just drop the bags or containers of greens into your freezer. They will keep fine for a few weeks and you can add them frozen to all your green Smoothies and Puds. If your bargain greens are not pre-washed and cut, of course you have to do this for them before you freeze them. Blanching is not needed for short term.